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Discussion of teaching and learning languages through experience, by means of audiovisual materials. Considers aims, rules, criteria of construction, methodology, and media. Describes Otterbein's Film-Text, a lip-synchronized sound-movie for teaching French. Covers filming, lesson material, learning method, and results.

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THE USE OF VISUAL MATERIALS IN THE TEACHING OF FRENCH

by

LaVelle Rosselot
Director of Foreign Language Laboratory
Otterbein College

and

Title III Language Consultant for Ohio

ED000337

The use of visual materials can in no way be separated from other techniques requisite to language learning. Therefore let us step back a pace and establish a footing on some basic concepts of audio-visual language teaching.

Recently, a future teacher in a methods class asked, "How can my students learn the meaning of a new word if they don't translate it into English?" The professor could only reply by asking: "Into what do you translate a new English word?" Because she was a serious student she thought a moment, then replied: "Into experience. You learn by experiencing the word in the situation or context in which it is used."

Learning by experiencing is perhaps the best point of departure for a review of basic concepts of audio-visual language teaching. Let us begin, then, with the widely known and accepted precept, "Learning is achieved through a meaningful experience."

How does this precept apply to language learning? The experience of most interest to us is, of course, one involving language for communication, or for reflective thinking, or one which creates a need for language. The implications of this experience concept for language teaching are tremendous:

1. The student must experience the language in a natural or near-natural situation.

2. Both the initial language experience and the subsequent drill need to have a direct and definite aim of communication.

3. Both experience and drill must intensify correct linguistic awareness.

Just what does all this mean? A child learns to ask for bread by seeing and hearing others ask for and receive, by himself wanting, being asked, and receiving, and finally by repeated successful attempts of his own to ask. Even though our students have a much broader general experience than the toddler, the grasp of the communication symbol (oral at first) must still be made through essentially the same processes.

How then does one best create the original situation? We can not each be a Rousseau with his one Emile.

Communication is more than just an oral or written language. For the average individual it is also largely visual. The emotions or the gestures or other factors of the situation in which one experiences the speech, often communicate the idea in the mind of the speaker more fully than the oral or written word. One is reminded, for instance, of the two diametrically opposed meanings of the sentence c'est de valeur. The voice inflection, the context, and the physical expression all help to denote the derogatory or commendatory idea of the speaker. Words by themselves are incomplete when depicting the emotions of life. As one becomes more and more conscious of the limitations of the sound laboratory and the printed text, and learns more of the value of the visual in both communication and language retention, experimentation goes deeper into audio-visual language teaching.

Until the recent interest in visual teaching it was necessary to depend upon creating in the minds of the student an imaginary situation. But because, according to our Chinese friend, one picture is worth a thousand words, visual experiences, especially in the early stages of language learning, can more effectively foster identification with or transition into a "living, meaningful situation."

There are many, many degrees of intensity to be provided in the pictured experience. These range from post card, magazine, or chart depiction of a setting for action, to the life-like lip-synchronized movie in which the student may identify himself emotionally with both the action and the speech. Any of these visual materials may be part of an excellent audio-visual method, but they must be an integral part of the course. Such a course not only will offer much in motivation and foreign culture, but can be the means of remarkable language learning and retention. The additional sensory perception, through the eye as well as through the ear and the voice, can communicate much that is essential to the emotional experience in the foreign language.

In either developing or evaluating an audio-visual course one must consider aims, methodology, and media. Is the aim reading for research, or is it the more popularly functional aim of conversation to fit modern social and political needs? Each has its own value and place in the American educational system. Fortunately each begins with certain common basic demands: training in the aural-oral-visual. We linguists have finally come to realize that in order to read (not translate), the ear must be vitally involved. Hence even "reading" students are now finding their way to listening and pronouncing laboratories. Just as surely, they need the retention aid of the visual experience. The big difference between the "reading" and "conversation" student will be the extent and kind of preoccupation with the printed page that comes as a secondary step.

Within the problem of determining the aim lies a sub-problem, that of whether to provide for an intensive or for an extensive training. Will the student be given a very broad contact with the language so that gradually he may "absorb" various concepts of the idiom? Or shall oral-aural mastery and language habit be the goal. In the latter case the

material should be only as extensive as the student can master well, not forgetting that the same linguistic material may be used in various contexts to strengthen habit formation. In the case of both language aims, the student needs extensive and meaningful aural-oral-visual experience and linguistic habit training before turning to the study of the printed symbol.

The wise builder will make use of all he has already learned from the field of methodology and the psychology of language learning:

> The aural-oral-visual will be thoroughly integrated. A three-fold sensory attack is three times as powerful as a single one.
>
> Materials will be as carefully graded as in any traditional text. But the visual will avoid forcing the naturalness of a situation for the sake of "grammar or vocabulary." There is nothing more ridiculous than trying to put on film: Voici mon livre; Voilà son livre; Voici le livre de Jean; Voilà le livre du professeur. In the first place such material violates the principle of story interest which must also be present in any picture to foster student "identification" and language experience.
>
> The law of expediency and use must determine the choice and time of presentation of linguistic forms. If only three forms of a new verb tense are needed in a particular lesson, only three should be presented. The other forms will be introduced when the immediate need is felt. Drill, as well as presentation, should follow the same law. One drills those linguistic patterns which are brought into play by a specific subject. The primary function of a verb tense is merely to establish a situation in time. The verb should be used, taught and drilled with such a function in view.
>
> The foreign idiom will first be introduced and comprehended in a life-like audio-visual experience. It is this experience in the audio-visual situation, not just the image and/or sound which is of value in retention.
>
> The follow-up of the experience will be in meaningful pattern drill rather than linguistic dissection.
>
> Due attention will be given to inductive teaching, spaced learning, short period concentration, repetition, etc.
>
> Culture will be an integral part of the language training, not something reserved for alternate Tuesdays or every third

> Friday. The real culture of a people can be understood and absorbed only as the learning of a language unfolds.

Conscious concern for these and other similar pedagogical guides is essential lest the delight of working in new and thrilling media whisk one away to impracticality.

There are two basic rules for working with visual media: Ask of the medium all it can give of teaching value, but do not ask it to do more than it can. Do not demand of a lump of pottery clay a porcelain performance. But neither should the highly flexible porcelain medium be limited to a pottery performance. And do not be ridden by the medium. Teach for the sake of the student. Look for guidance to your student's needs. And heed the basic psychological laws of learning.

In the visual field first take the still image. Whether it be magazine clippings, color slides or film strip, the use will be essentially the same. If this material is to be an integral part of the method it must be chosen to teach linguistic skills directly and culture inductively. The writer of a traditional text will teach the single pronoun object before introducing the multiple object. So in the early learning stage must the individual picture concentrate on teaching <u>one</u> thing. This singleness of aim is very limiting to a photographer who lives local color. The single picture teaches a single sentence or idea of the text or becomes the stimulus for drill of a particular linguistic pattern. It is the basis for not more than five drill questions: <u>Who</u>, <u>What</u>, <u>When</u>, <u>Where</u>, and <u>How</u>, all related to the specific learning problem. The picture which presents a number of subjects is fit only for a review drill, and will be of little benefit in visual <u>teaching</u>. A conscious distinction must be made between teaching and drill. Limiting the picture to the single stimulus emphasis immediately brings up the problem of the quantity of pictures

necessary to accompany a brief text, but this is not the greatest limitation of the still picture. For things, simple verb action, split second action the single emphasis of the still image is of great value, but for expressing thoughts of purpose, causes, results, reasons for, emotions about a thing, situation, or action the still image is limited in its contribution. A strip film or slide with accompanying dialogue on tape does not even carry the vraisemblance of a comic book where the printed speech, and lack of audible sound still leave the reader to experience the situation in imagination. The sound and image combination moves out of the field of vraisemblance into the field of réalité. When the audio-visual effect sets up an expectancy of réalité and the effect falls short of normal reality the effect is often more disturbing than instructive. In oral communication, reactions are visible before, during, and after speech. These reactions are part of the emotional and physical setting in which language is normally experienced and learned.

Lip movements, facial expressions, gestures are part of the visual interpretive media at our disposal. When still pictures make up the core of the perceptual medium the teacher must depend upon her own power of interpretative action to establish the liaison between speech and reaction to the situation. The problem of interpretation is thus much more difficult than when the moving picture is used. This interpretation must not be left to chance. It will have a specific place in the planning of the beginning audio-visual text. Care, then, must be taken to use a visual medium to its best advantage, and to relegate to other media tasks which can be better performed elsewhere, with other materials and equipment.

In the movie-centered text there exists the same problem of single emphasis as in the still image. This can be partially handled through

scene shifts, that is, setting the stage with a regular or wide-angle lens, narrowing to the speaker, and then if the situation warrants, a close-up with telephoto lens where the speech needs to be related to one object, or one action singled out of many. To illustrate the necessity of this single emphasis take an experience from the filming of the Otterbein Film-Text, a lip-synchronized sound-movie for teaching beginning French. The scene was at Orléans. The two main characters of the text had duly noted the destruction and the reconstruction of the center of the city, had commented upon the statue of Joan of Arc. The conversation led naturally, skillfully, from the statue to the historic Joan. The uncle and niece of the story had opened a road map of France, and laid it out on the trunk of the car. With telephoto lens the movements of the French and English were carefully traced out, and the imperfect tense smoothly incorporated. However, back in the classroom the scene had to be run several extra times in succession. Something was obviously amiss. Student interest was definitely there, but comprehension of the text was not. Then it was finally discovered that in the shooting, the camera had included part of the rear window of the Morris Minor which the party was using. The window still bore the old factory inscription "Another Morris", but the word "Morris" was partially obliterated. The class had spent its time trying to decipher the sign. Again, the choice and use of medium must match the teaching <u>needs</u>.

As in no other medium there are properties peculiar to the movie which can be of inestimable value to language teaching. The properly prepared film can facilitate the liaison between speech and object or action, between expressed thought and situation. The movie is capable of taking the student into the foreign situation as no other medium can. The

effective choice of characters, actions, and situations permits student identification with the characters. If prepared essentially as a teaching device the movie can give us not a reasonable facsimile of an experience, but the experience itself, to whatever extent the student can identify himself with the situation. Thus by hearing and seeing at the same time, the student can experience the language which the situation demands for communication. However, several criteria are inherent in the construction of the materials for linguistic experience.

1. *The film must* be allowed by all means to utilize one of its greatest teaching contributions: lip synchronization. The characters must be allowed to speak for themselves. The student will then have the added advantage of being able to observe the same lip movements repeatedly.

2. The film must not only be based upon a reasonable amount of known material, but must provide for necessary repetition in a new context.

3. The picture must aid linguistic (oral) comprehension without "telling all."

4. It must have enough universal interest to call forth emotional identification. Situations, actions and emotions should be within the student's range of experience, capacity and interest. There must be a wealth of human interest, and the conversations, though graded in vocabulary and structure, must be NATURAL. For the most complete identification, the language of the situation should be that which is actually needed for oral communication in the scene depicted. Again, let this communication be lip-synchronized speech between characters rather than one-person narration. The latter, though necessary at a certain point in the student's learning experience is weak as initial experience for it has a tendency to leave the student on the oustide looking in.

Just as there is danger of going overboard on conversation without supporting situation, there is danger also of limiting too strictly the interpretation of what is audio-visual. It is quite logical to expect a teaching film to put the text across to the student. This may be done by: (1) direct audio-visual technique ("This is an apple"), (2) by inference, (3) by the interplay of language and the logical development of a situation, or (4) by the use of already known linguistic forms. It is a poor teaching film that must be translated to be understood. It is just as poor a film that can be understood without recourse to the spoken word. The middle road certainly is the happy one, where through gesture, inference, object, action or other perceptual media or even through definition, the new word may be made meaningful.

At times, in staging real-life situations, conversations about the situations must be carried on between several characters. At first this procedure seems non-audio-visual. But consider the force of a TV panel as compared with that of a radio panel. Further, if such conversations are composed primarily of known elements, or if unknown words can be grasped in context, such scenes offer good training in the rapid flow of normal conversation. Also, careful filming can give value to a study in lip movements, accompanying facial expressions, emotional interplay between characters or between characters and situation, etc..

At the close of the above-mentioned scene at Orléans, the young niece half apologetically told her uncle that though she was very fond of French history, she would, at this moment (already past meal time) have much preferred a good hamburger sandwich <u>à l'américaine</u>. Though the sentence used contained certain unknown elements, the known elements carried the thought and the class expressed a hearty approval, especially

since it was the last class before lunch. Further, the unknown items were picked up and learned in context, through the sheer force of class enthusiasm.

Much of the potency of the audio-visual experience lies in its use in the initial contact with the lesson material. The first contact should be the "experience lesson," the "teaching" lesson. The audio-visual experience loses much of its power if reduced to the place of a summary lesson. Only in very exceptional cases, is there value in studying the written text before presentation of the visual. The procedures of first language learning validate only too strongly the audio-visual as the introductory procedure.

There is more to audio-visual than the initial contact, however. There must be repeated contact -- the over-learning drill. That which is experienced audio-visually must be fixed by effective aural-oral drill, and where possible, by additional visual drill. Aural-oral repetition and self-correction exercises in the language laboratory, or aural-oral work with a native speaker are now becoming accepted procedures in the over-learning drill. But nothing can make up for the initial audio-visual experience, and for subsequent aural-oral interpretation and drill in meaningful context under the direction of an able linguist and teacher.

Since language is essentially a means of communication, it is only logical that the learning process employ language in this its most normal use: as a means of communication. Logically, too, the initial experience and subsequent drill should be limited to aural-oral communication until such time as the student shows mastery sufficient to indicate writing and reading readiness. Readiness is determined in precisely the same manner as in the young child approaching similar skills in his native tongue.

He is judged by his ability to comprehend and communicate in the oral language.

Initial use of the oral language implies a need to communicate. Something within both the learning and over-learning or drill situations must require communication: i.e., communication between actors in the pictured experience, later between teacher and student, and among students. Need to communicate definitely controls the type of exercises used for the over-learning drill, as well as the devices for class recitation. No longer can one fall back on a series of disconnected sentences to drill a syntactical pattern. Drill for all early learning should be linked logically with the original learning experience. Though the context for drill material should be forever widening, the initial experience must remain the hub.

Another basic control of both initial experience and over-learning drill is the reward for correctness of response. This reward is tantamount to language learning. "Nothing succeeds like success." The old adage has much of value for the entire learning and drill procedure. In fact this age-old truth can re-vamp our entire teaching philosophy. Concern here for either tangible or emotional reward is negligible. Rather does the concern lie in the unconscious tendency to mimic what one hears. Why does one child say HE'S WENT and another, HE'S GONE? The answer is obvious. Is it possible so to teach as to eliminate a great percentage of the learning errors? Certain techniques help.

1. Let the student hear as little inefficient speaking as possible. The less incorrectness he hears, the better chance the student has to learn to hear correctly. To the unconscious tendency to mimic may be added a cultivated one.

2. Take first things first -- work for comprehension before attempting oral composition.

3. Use much choral response before calling on individuals in the very early learning period. This means getting a correct response from the class before asking for the same response from an individual.

4. When the student must work in the laboratory, or away from the teacher, use recorded self-correction exercises; i.e., questions, space for reply, correct reply.

If the emphasis is put upon correctness rather than upon correcting there must be a basic change in class purpose. No longer does the student prepare homework to be brought to class for correction. Class time is reserved for correct response drill with meaningful materials under the guise of communication. This drill must be stimulated by and under the direction of the master teacher. Here language that has already been over-learned is brought into play in meaningful oral (then later written) communication. Such class procedure requires skillful handling of both class and material, but the results are well worth the effort.

The effective audio-visual course will strive to fulfill the basic needs of language instruction. The techniques employed will stem from a well thought-out philosophy of methodology and be based upon sound psychology of learning. Finally, effective teaching will integrate this philosophy with the maximum contribution of the chosen audio-visual media. The media should never rule the teaching techniques, but today there is no excuse for accepting anything less than the fullest, most effective use of any aural-oral-visual medium. Materials are needed which will permit the student to live a language experience that is multi-sensory. He is led in this experience by a skillful teacher who will teach, then drill the

student in the language, keeping this language always a logical and basic tool of communication. This communication will be aural-oral-visual until such a time as the student shows mastery sufficient to be concerned with the written skills. Continuous and untiring effort will be made to keep the student using this communication medium in such a way that the opportunities for unnecessary error will be reduced to a minimum. Such an effort suggests that the early repetition of linguistic forms will be in numerous and varied meaningful contexts, all more or less related to the initial experience in which the form was first learned. In later repetition, this known material will appear naturally in new and different learning experiences, thus providing a basis of common expression upon which to build future lessons.

Film-Text is an Otterbein College textbook for beginning French. This movie method is not an easier way to learn French; but it can be a more effective way.

The effectiveness of Film-Text depends in part, however, on the willingness of the student to follow conscientiously and thoroughly the study and learning techniques set up.

The learning method of Film-Text is patterned upon the same principles as those involved in learning one's mother tongue:

1. Experiencing or living the oral language of a particular situation.

2. Imitation and frequent repetition of that oral language experience in meaningful situations.

How is the student going to study Film-Text? All new material is taught in class through the film, or through the study of the film. This new material is not to be found in written form anywhere. Therefore, the

class period is most often a vital period of concentration and the student must learn tomorrow's lesson in class today. Homework consists in overlearning what you have just had in class. This overlearning means aural-oral study to the point of complete memorization and habit formation. This type of thorough preparation is expected of every pupil every single day.

The first lesson involves three people who meet on the Otterbein College Campus, greet each other and then go on their respective ways. The student tries immediately to attach groups of sounds, not individual words, to the normal life situation.

Those responsible for teaching modern foreign languages at Otterbein College have not been content with traditional methods and traditional results. A program utilizing a new concept of teaching French is well along in development and application. This is a system technically described as the audio-visual Film-Text method. More simply put, it is a method which appeals to the eye and ear simultaneously, and which in planned sequences carries the student along in French daily life with lip-synchronized French voices. It comes as close to the ideal of living with a French family as seems possible and practical.

Most language films are at present merely an interesting interlude for intermediate students, with the educational value lying chiefly in the interest-getting power. The movie as a teaching technique in foreign language is generally at the same stage of pedagogic development as the record was at the beginning of the audio phase, the birth of the language laboratory.

The Otterbein Film-Text method is an attempt to move forward the visual in language learning, along the same principles that we all accept

now as being essential in audio techniques. The visual must be an integral part of the language experience, not an embellishment. The audio-visual experience must be the core of the language learning process if we wish to save time and produce effective results in our foreign language teaching.

Film-Text was for the most part filmed in France. It is now being used for the fourth year in beginning French classes at Otterbein (12 first-year sections in all) and in eight experimental second year sections. This is a preliminary experimental testing for effectiveness of materials and techniques.

Film-Text is this year being tested in several Ohio colleges and junior and senior high schools with gratifying results.

Printed textbooks have been put aside. Through lip-synchronized film, with authentic French scenes and situations, and voices, the student is led naturally and interestedly into the language by both eye and ear. Grammar becomes a tool instead of an apparent end. Conversation becomes the open door to a new culture.

Just What Is Film-Text?

1. It is an audio-visual text instead of a printed one.

2. It is an opportunity for the student to experience the foreign language in a real-life situation.

3. This audio-visual text is a 16mm. lip-synchronized movie planned to cover a two-year college course.

4. The text material is suited to junior and senior high school as well as college.

5. All material in Film-Text is carefully graded to insure transition from known to unknown, from simple to complex. However, it is an inflexible rule that naturalness of a situation must be preserved. A film

scene may be simplified for the sake of graded material, but it will never be warped by the desire to teach a particular grammatical principle.

6. Culture is not buildings and streets. It is taught as an integral part of the language and the situation.

7. All grammar and related structural linguistics are taught inductively and functionally. Irregular verbs, for example, are first taught in meaningful situations as vocabulary burden. Only those forms of a verb are taught which will be of use in a particular lesson. A form needed three lessons hence will be taught when the need arises. When all forms have been learned and the student uses them automatically, then those forms will be assembled into their own grammatical pattern as review.

8. Film-Text is a language teaching film. It is a direct method tool. Therefore, no translation is used even in homework drill.

9. Reading and writing are taught only when the student exhibits a readiness. All reading and writing for the first year deal with known vocabulary and language structure. Writing proceeds from the foreign aural-oral symbol to the foreign written symbol. No written script is used on any lesson.material until students have mastered an active aural-oral use of that text material.

There are some things which the Film-Text is not.

1. It is not a narrated travelogue. Narration leaves the student on the outside looking in, while lip-synchronization permits the student to experience vicariously a situation through his identification with the actors he has already learned to know.

2. Film-Text is not an art film. Every artistic urge must be evaluated in the light of pedagogy.

3. It is not a "cultural" film. True culture is an inescapable part of language and real-life situations. It will permeate of its own accord.

4. Film-Text is not an audio-visual aid designed to accompany a regular text. It is the text. This, of course, implies a predominately aural-oral aim. As you have already seen, other skills are not neglected.

How does the student learn? By as natural a method as possible. Basically he learns by the method used in acquiring his mother tongue. He experiences the language in a meaningful situation. He experiences it many times. He becomes a participant in the situations and uses the language which has taken on meaning.

What Teaching Techniques Are Used?

1. Without any previous preparation whatever, the student views the film (short at first and gradually increasing in length) many, many times.

2. Through skillful manipulation of the language by the teacher, he establishes relationships between groups of sound and object, action, situation or reaction to any of these. He is taught to guess intelligently.

3. He imitates the language of the situation in class and in homework drill.

4. He expresses himself in the language of the situation -- at first in words or small structural patterns -- but always in response to a complete sentence situation. By the end of the class period the student should know temporarily his lesson for the next day.

5. Homework, especially at Otterbein, since there is a language laboratory, is actually several operations spread over several nights:

a. Listening and imitating a recording of the film sound track.

b. Learning the sound track.

c. Working with recorded self-checking exercises in the foreign language. These begin with questions which call for answers using all the new and much old lesson material. As the student proceeds the exercises lead him away from the text material into his own personal life situations limited always by vocabulary and structural items being drilled. The correct answer to each drill question is given on the recorded exercise, directly after the pause for student response so as to eliminate unnecessary error and to give extra pattern drill even in the responses.

d. When the student can carry on intelligent conversation about the film-text and about similar life experience he is permitted to work with the written scenario in loose-leaf form. This he first studies in class in order to stress the transcription from sound to written symbols. Next, he studies the script with the recorded text. This is followed by various drill exercises, such as dictations, questions to be answered, and directed composition. These drills are always in the foreign idiom.

e. Reading lessons in the form of review material in new context offer drill in comprehension of the written language. Only in the more advanced second year work is reading concerned with new material. Even here, however, the student is prepared by film for comprehension of the reading text.

What Results Have Been Noted?

1. Increased interest, motivation, and effort.

2. Lack of usual self-consciousness. We have numerous second year students going to foreign universities to study during the summer as

compared with a few advanced students in past years. These second year students have none of the usual fear and discouragement for work in the foreign idiom.

3. Tests have shown that in oral comprehension the first year film-text student ranks above the norm of national second year students and fifty per-cent are reaching the third year norms.

4. In reading and writing also, class norms are almost a year ahead of the average.

5. Retention has been especially improved.

6. Students at the end of three semesters were able to step ahead into sixth semester literature, and keep in the upper-third of the class "brought up" by traditional methods.

The Film-Text movie method is not the answer to all language teaching problems. However, we firmly believe that it is a stepping-stone to a more natural and more effective language experience for our students.